

Washington, DC--Congressman Tim Ryan (OH-17) and Congressman Charlie Wilson (OH-06) announced the introduction of the Emergency Neighborhood Reclamation Act today. The Ryan-Wilson bill would authorize \$1 billion in federal funds for the demolition of abandoned buildings in blighted areas. Ryan-Wilson responds to the mortgage foreclosure crisis and will help ensure the public health and safety of residents who stay behind.

“Cities like Akron, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Detroit and Youngstown need to meet the challenges of urban population decline and the mortgage foreclosure crisis. These problems have led to the abandonment of whole neighborhoods,” said Congressman Ryan. “This money will help tear down abandoned and dilapidated structures which threaten the public health and safety of our communities. I am proud to work with my good friend Congressman Charlie Wilson on this critically-needed legislation.”

“The concern is that many foreclosed homes have been empty for a long period of time. Many of them have been stripped of their copper piping and other valuable parts. To rehabilitate such homes is often more expensive than demolishing and starting new. We need to do what’s best for neighborhoods that are hurting,” said Congressman Charlie Wilson.

Many cities in the Midwest, including Youngstown, currently have a surplus of abandoned properties. However, it is not always feasible to rehabilitate and reuse them due to prolonged job and population losses. These structures create blight, serve as breeding grounds for rats and other vermin, are used for illicit purposes such as drug trafficking and distribution and create a financial burden on the cities that still need to provide public utilities to the area. The prompt demolition and removal of these properties is necessary to protect public health and safety but many cities across the country don’t have the money or resources to demolish these houses.

“We will not allow whole neighborhoods to turn into ghost towns. Providing cities with the necessary resources to pursue “creative shrinkage” policies, as Youngstown has, is a successful strategy for economic development,” said Congressman Ryan. “This funding will be used to demolish existing structures and create green space, parks and new development in the future,” said Congressman Ryan.

“I look forward to working with Congressman Tim Ryan on this bill and other important pieces of housing legislation as Congress tackles the sub-prime mortgage foreclosure crisis,” said Congressman Wilson.